

4

GISCHLER  
BALDEÓN  
MOSSA

# SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE





**F**or eons, the scales balancing the supernatural realms have held steady...until now. Only the strangest of alliances can save Heaven and Hell...a union of disparate heroes, counteracting the sins of mortals as...

# SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE

At the dawn of time, Heaven and Hell forged a pact known as the Covenant. Although the two sides were at war, every thousand years a ceasefire would occur where the rules of engagement were renegotiated. Thus, the balance between Heaven and Hell has been maintained to this day.

After a dying angel handed him a silver bullet, Johnny Blaze (A.K.A. Ghost Rider) turned to Daimon Hellstrom (A.K.A. Hellstorm) for answers. Unbeknownst to them, the silver bullet was forged from one of the enchanted coins that were used to pay the biblical traitor Judas Iscariot and imbued with the power to wipe out angelic beings permanently without possibility of reincarnation. The bullet and its 29 counterparts have changed hands throughout the ages, but now are in the possession of the human sorcerer Necrodamus and his lieutenant Razan the Night Jackal, who have a grand scheme that involves forging the cursed silver into a rocket!

With time running short before the Covenant, Ghost Rider and Hellstorm's associates Blade and Satana track down a lead that might take them to Necrodamus and Razan...

## WAR AT THE GATES OF HELL PART IV

**VICTOR GISCHLER**  
WRITER

**DAVID BALDEÓN**  
ARTIST

**ANDRES MOSSA**  
COLOR ARTIST

**VC's CORY PETIT**  
LETTERER

**DAN MORA & FEDERICO BLEE**  
COVER ARTISTS

**JAY BOWEN**  
DESIGNER

**CHRIS ROBINSON**  
EDITOR

**C.B. CEBULSKI**  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

**JOE QUESADA**  
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER

**DAN BUCKLEY**  
PRESIDENT

**ALAN FINE**  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

SPECIAL THANKS TO AXEL ALONSO





"WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU *GAVE* HIM THE SILVER?"



I MANAGED SECURITY FOR THE JUDAS SILVER. IT WAS JUST *SITTING* THERE, SO I FIGURED WHY NOT TRADE IT FOR SOMETHING I COULD USE.

SUCH AS?

A SPELL BOOK. HIGHER-LEVEL STUFF THAN I'M USED TO. IT WAS THE *ONLY* WAY I COULD GET WHAT I WANTED.



AND NEVER MIND WHAT *HAVOC* THIS NECRODAMUS IS LOOKING TO PERPETRATE WITH THAT SILVER?

YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY WINNING US OVER.



I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HE INTENDED. I DIDN'T *WANT* TO KNOW.

BUT WHEN I HEARD YOU WERE IN PORT BRIMSTONE, I KNEW WE NEEDED TO TALK.





BECAUSE WHEN THIS IS OVER AND PEOPLE POINT FINGERS, I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER I TRIED TO **HELP**.

AND WE SHOULD TRUST YOU **WHY?**

MAYBE YOU'RE FEEDING US FALSE INFORMATION TO THROW US OFF.



FINE.

IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE I'M TRYING TO HELP, THEN HERE'S REASON NUMBER **TWO** I CAME TO FIND YOU.



"THAT GIGANTIC FREAK RAZAN TRIED TO **KILL** ME. SHE DOES ALL OF NECRODAMUS' HEAVY LIFTING.

"ANYONE WHO'D BEEN **NEAR** THAT SILVER IS BEING **SILENCED**.

"I BARELY ESCAPED WITH MY LIFE."





SO IF MY SENSE OF GOOD CITIZENSHIP SEEMS SUSPECT TO YOU, I HOPE YOU'LL AT LEAST BELIEVE MY SENSE OF SELF-PRESERVATION.

WHETHER RAZAN IS STILL AFTER ME OR NOT, I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'D BE A *FOOL* TO RISK IT.

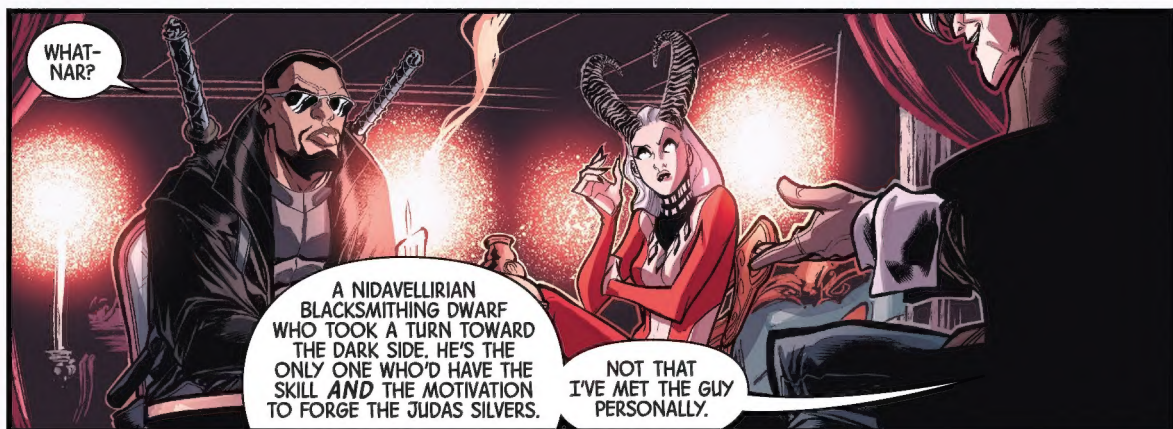


OKAY, BUT *BELIEVING* YOU AND *FORGIVING* YOU ISN'T THE SAME THING. YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE US MORE THAN HIS GOFER IF YOU WANT ON OUR GOOD SIDE.



**SNAP**

GOT IT. RAGNAR.



WHAT-NAR?

A NIDAVELLIRIAN BLACKSMITHING DWARF WHO TOOK A TURN TOWARD THE DARK SIDE. HE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO'D HAVE THE SKILL *AND* THE MOTIVATION TO FORGE THE JUDAS SILVERS.

NOT THAT I'VE MET THE GUY PERSONALLY.



AND LET ME GUESS. YOU HAVE *NO* IDEA WHERE TO LOCATE THIS DWARF.

ACTUALLY...



...I MIGHT.



"YOU'VE BROUGHT  
IT! EXCELLENT. GOOD  
WORK, RAZAN."

WHY DON'T  
YOU **SMILE** FOR  
A CHANGE? OUR  
VICTORY IS AT  
HAND!

HAND ME  
THAT CROWBAR,  
WILL YOU?

**YOUR**  
VICTORY. NOT MINE,  
NECRODAMUS.

I SERVE  
YOU AS A  
MATTER  
OF HONOR  
ONLY.

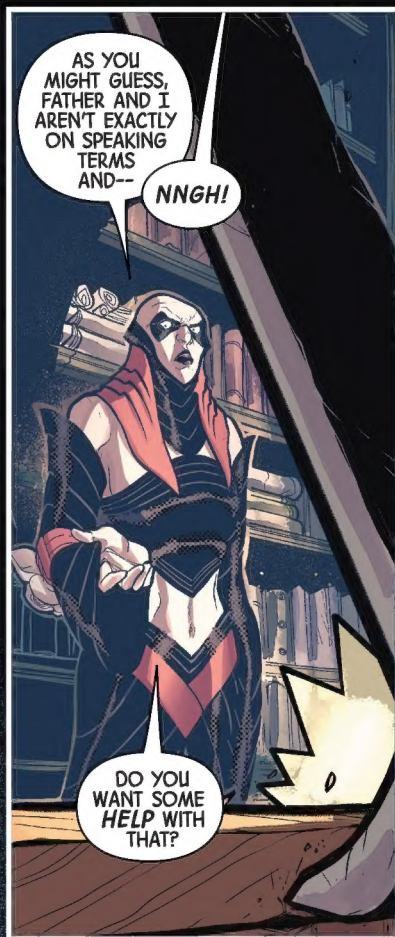
YOU'D  
RATHER I LEFT YOU  
IMPRISONED?

OF  
COURSE  
NOT.

OKAY,  
THEN.

HOW  
IS GOOD  
OLD OSIRIS,  
ANYWAY?





AS YOU MIGHT GUESS, FATHER AND I AREN'T EXACTLY ON SPEAKING TERMS AND--

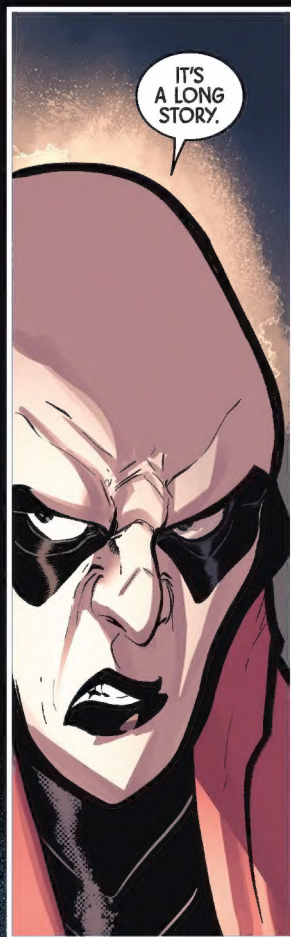
NNGH!

DO YOU WANT SOME HELP WITH THAT?



NO NO. NNGH. I WANT TO DO IT.

WHY DID YOUR FATHER IMPRISON YOU, ANYWAY? YOU'VE NEVER MENTIONED IT.




IT'S A LONG STORY.



OH, MY MY. ISN'T SHE LOVELY?

THIS IS GOING TO BE FUN.





THE POPOCATEPETL VOLCANO. RAGNAR NEEDS THE HOTTEST POSSIBLE FIRES FOR HIS FORGE. HE LIKES VOLCANOS.

LET ME DO THE TALKING.



SO THE FAMOUS DAEMON HELLSTROM NEEDS THE LEGENDARY FORGING SKILLS OF RAGNAR. I'M FLATTERED.

WHAT DO YOU BRING ME? RARE METALS? MAGICAL IN NATURE? IF YOU NEED RAGNAR, THEN IT MUST BE A TASK BEYOND MERE MORTAL BLACKSMITHING.

INDEED, THE TASK I HAVE IN MIND NEEDS A GREAT AMOUNT OF SKILL, AND IF YOUR REPUTATION IS TRUE, THEN YOU'RE DEFINITELY THE BLACKSMITH FOR THE JOB.

IF YOUR REPUTATION IS TRUE.

YOU SEEK TO **TEST** RAGNAR.

ASK YOUR QUESTIONS.



I'M NOT SURE ABOUT A GUY WHO REFERS TO HIMSELF IN THE THIRD PERSON.

JOHNNY BLAZE DOES NOT APPROVE.





WORD'S GOTTEN  
AROUND ABOUT YOUR  
LATEST PROJECT.

OH? I WAS  
TOLD THERE WAS  
A TRAIL OF DEAD BODIES  
TEN MILES LONG SPECIFICALLY  
TO **KEEP** WORD FROM  
GETTING AROUND.  
WELL, NEVER MIND.

A SECRET  
LIKE THAT NEVER  
STAYS KEPT FOR  
LONG.

I'M CURIOUS  
HOW IT TURNED OUT.  
THE MATERIALS MUST  
HAVE BEEN TRICKY TO WORK  
WITH. I'M NO BLACKSMITH,  
BUT I KNOW A LITTLE  
SOMETHING ABOUT  
MAGIC AND CURSES.



IF THERE WAS  
SOME FLAW, EVEN  
THE **TINIEST** MISTAKE,  
THEN ALL THAT  
WORK WOULD BE  
WASTED.

I NEED  
**REASSURANCES**  
BEFORE YOU GO  
HAMMERING AT THE  
RARE ITEM I'M  
BRINGING YOU.



LET ME SEE IF I  
UNDERSTAND  
YOU.

YOU WANT TO  
KNOW IF THE WEAPON  
I FORGED FROM THE  
JUDAS SILVER HAS ANY...  
**WEAKNESSES.**

JUDAS  
SILVER? I NEVER  
MENTIONED--

LET ME ASK **YOU**  
SOMETHING, DAIMON  
HELLSTROM...



...DO YOU  
TAKE ME FOR  
A FOOL?

WHAM





I WORK  
THE FIRES OF THE  
EARTH ITSELF. YOUR  
FLAMES ARE  
NOTHING.

THEN  
TRY ME,  
DWARF!

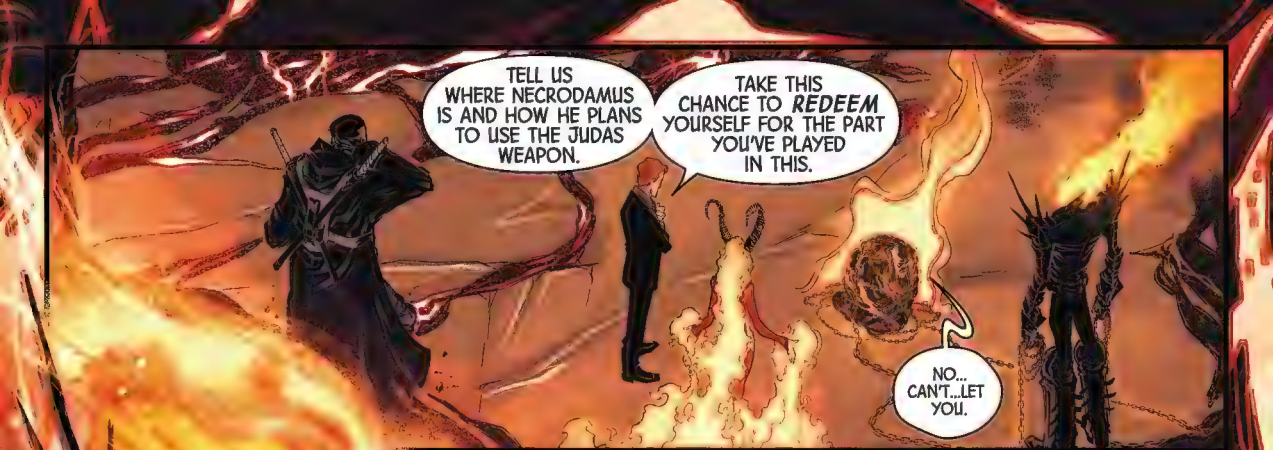


FOR MY  
FIRE BURNS  
THE SOUL!

AA  
RR  
GH!







TELL US  
WHERE NECRODAMUS  
IS AND HOW HE PLANS  
TO USE THE JUDAS  
WEAPON.

TAKE THIS  
CHANCE TO **REDEEM**  
YOURSELF FOR THE PART  
YOU'VE PLAYED  
IN THIS.

NO...  
CAN'T...LET  
YOU.



SORRY FOR  
THE CLUMSY RUSE,  
BUT YOU UNDERSTAND  
WE MUST FIND OUT MORE  
ABOUT NECRODAMUS'  
PLAN FOR THE  
SILVER.

ARE YOU  
REALLY SO LOYAL TO  
NECRODAMUS?

NECRODAMUS  
IS NOTHING TO  
ME. THE WORK IS  
**EVERYTHING.**

THE JUDAS  
WEAPON IS MY  
GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT.  
TO SEE IT SO CASUALLY  
UNDONE...AFTER MY  
TIRELESS EFFORTS TO  
MEET THE SORCERER'S  
IMPOSSIBLE  
DEADLINE...

DOES THE  
ENTIRE WORLD  
NEED TO BE TURNED  
UPSIDE DOWN JUST TO  
SATISFY YOUR SENSE OF  
ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT?  
TELL US SOMETHING  
TO HELP US.

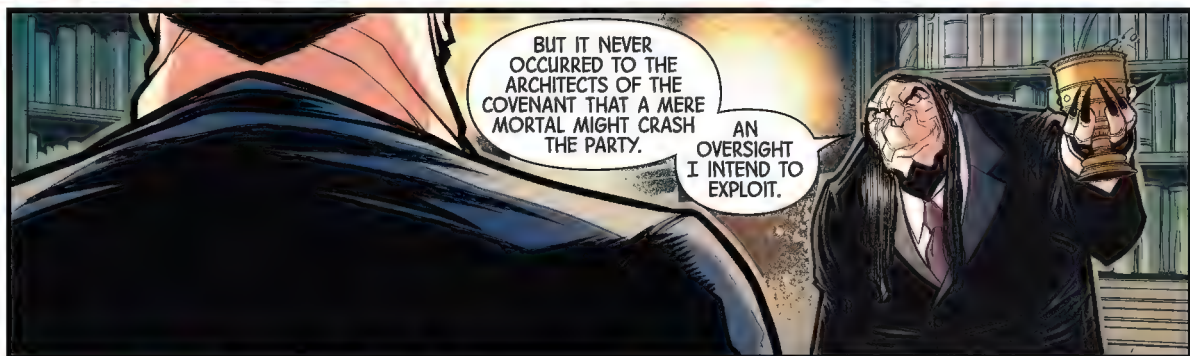
TELL US  
WHERE THE  
COVENANT IS TO  
TAKE PLACE, TELL  
US **WHEN.**



"THE COVENANT  
TAKES PLACE  
TOMORROW NIGHT."



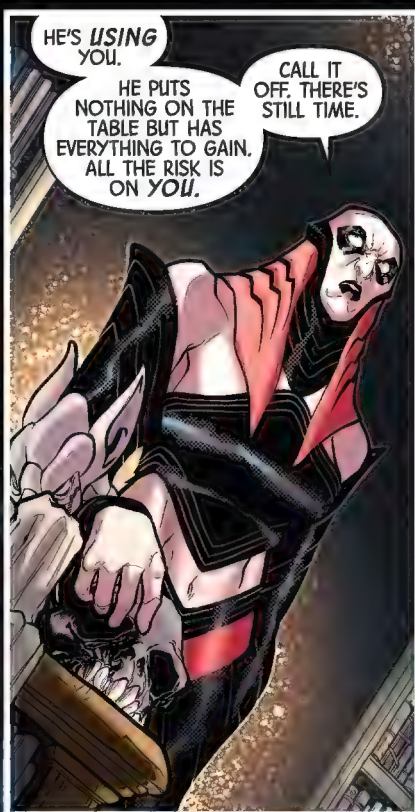








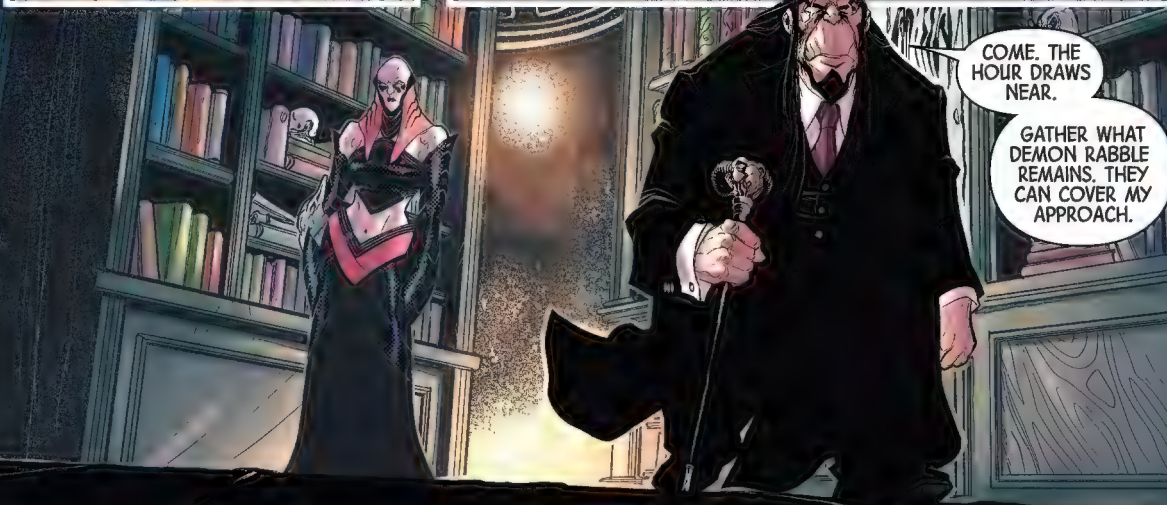
YOU  
HEARD?  
OF  
COURSE.  
THOUGHTS?



HE'S *USING*  
YOU.  
HE PUTS  
NOTHING ON THE  
TABLE BUT HAS  
EVERYTHING TO GAIN.  
ALL THE RISK IS  
ON *YOU*.  
CALL IT  
OFF. THERE'S  
STILL TIME.



*OF COURSE*  
HE'S USING ME. IF IT  
WERE SOMETHING HE  
COULD DO HIMSELF, HE  
WOULDN'T NEED ME  
AT ALL.  
NO. WE'VE  
COME TOO FAR  
TO TURN BACK  
NOW.

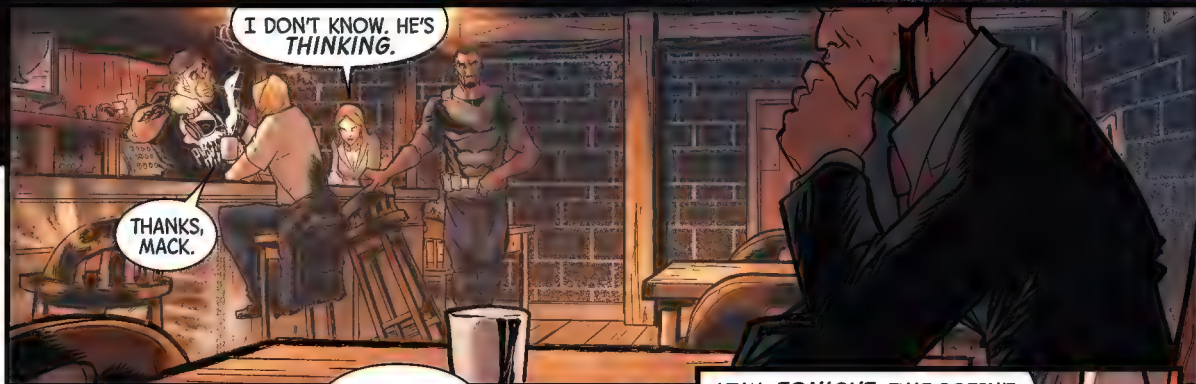


COME. THE  
HOUR DRAWS  
NEAR.  
GATHER WHAT  
DEMON RABBLE  
REMAINS. THEY  
CAN COVER MY  
APPROACH.

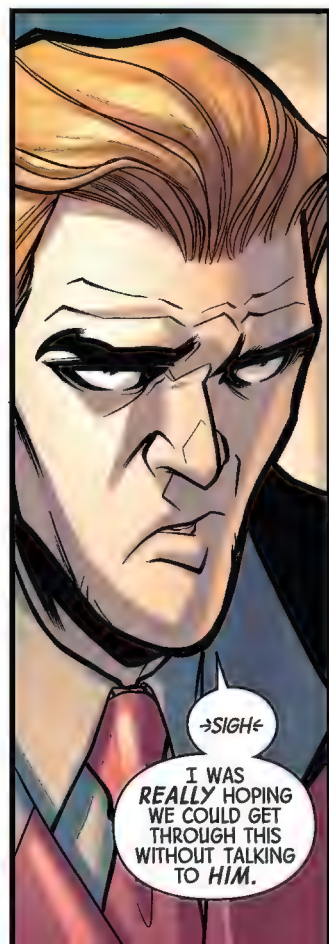
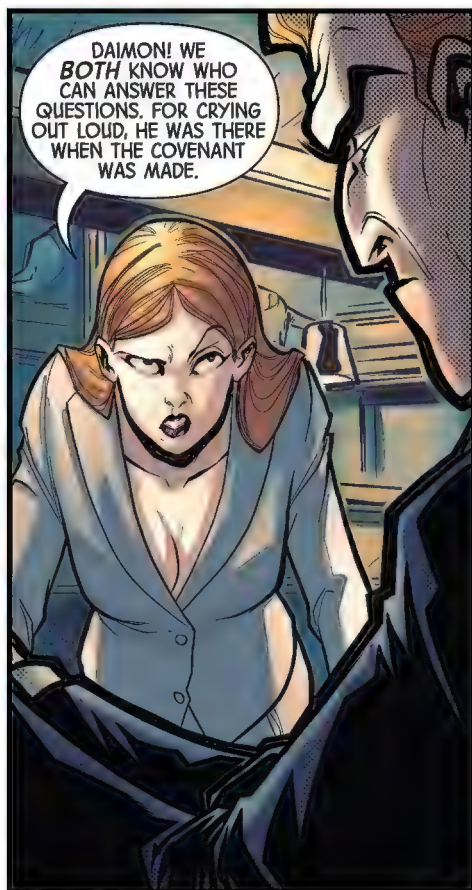
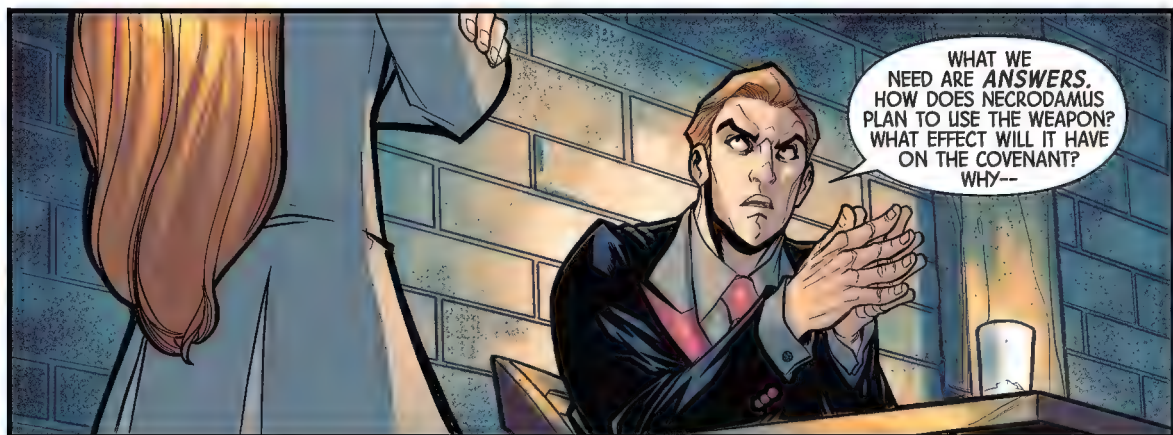
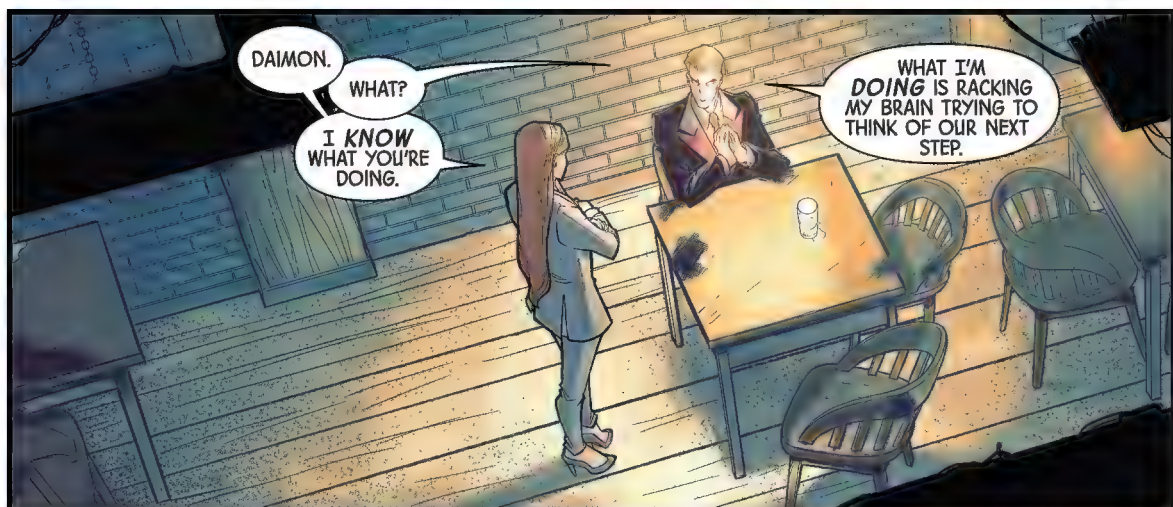




HOW MUCH LONGER  
IS HE GOING  
TO SIT THERE?





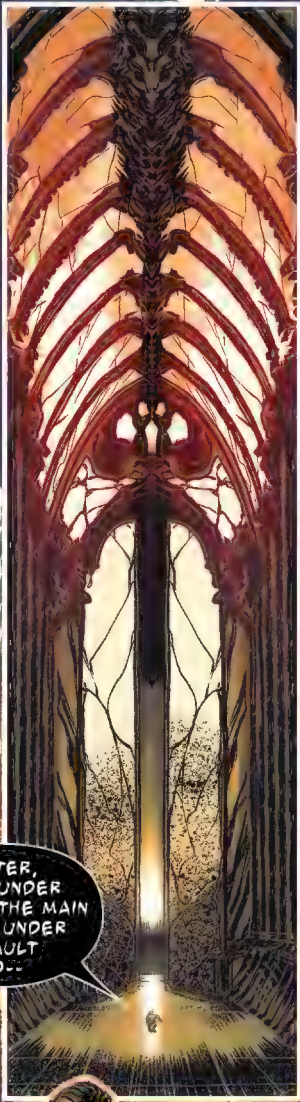






LORD MARDUK!

MASTER,  
WE'RE UNDER  
ATTACK! THE MAIN  
HALL IS UNDER  
ASSAULT  
AND--



BE  
SILENT, YOU  
IDIOT.



IT'S  
JUST MY  
KIDS.





TO WHAT  
DO I OWE THE  
PLEASURE OF  
THIS FAMILY  
REUNION?



I  
THINK YOU  
KNOW.

AH, THE  
COVENANT. YES,  
WHAT WOULD YOU  
LIKE TO KNOW?



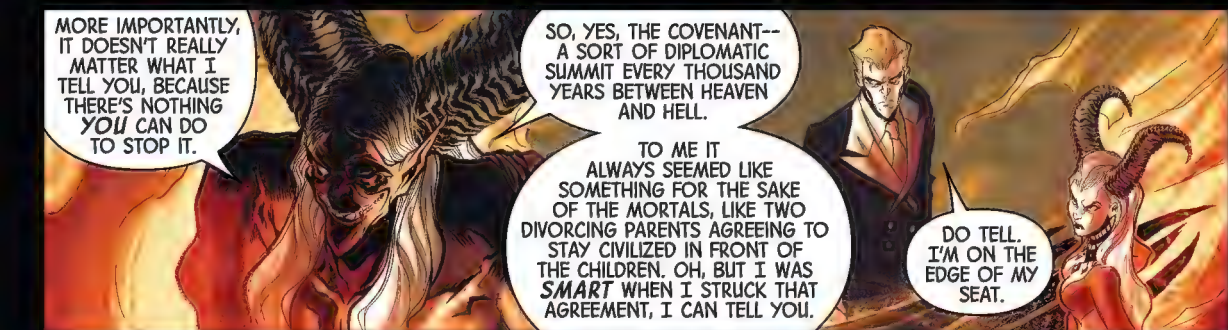
YOU MEAN  
YOU'LL TELL US?  
JUST LIKE THAT?

COLOR ME  
SUSPICIOUS.



DON'T  
YOU HAVE  
ANY FAITH IN  
YOUR FATHER,  
SATANA?

THE FACT IS, I  
RATHER *ENJOY*  
BRAGGING.



MORE IMPORTANTLY,  
IT DOESN'T REALLY  
MATTER WHAT I  
TELL YOU, BECAUSE  
THERE'S NOTHING  
*YOU* CAN DO  
TO STOP IT.

SO, YES, THE COVENANT--  
A SORT OF DIPLOMATIC  
SUMMIT EVERY THOUSAND  
YEARS BETWEEN HEAVEN  
AND HELL.

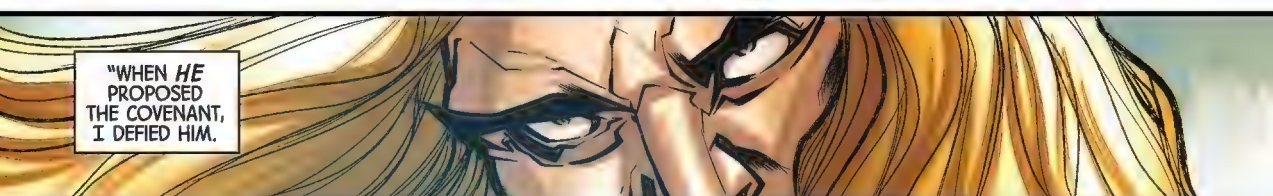
TO ME IT  
ALWAYS SEEMED LIKE  
SOMETHING FOR THE SAKE  
OF THE MORTALS, LIKE TWO  
DIVORCING PARENTS AGREEING TO  
STAY CIVILIZED IN FRONT OF  
THE CHILDREN. OH, BUT I WAS  
*SMART* WHEN I STRUCK THAT  
AGREEMENT, I CAN TELL YOU.

DO TELL.  
I'M ON THE  
EDGE OF MY  
SEAT.



I WAS STILL GOING  
BY *LUCIFER* THEN,  
STILL FEELING THE HEAT  
OF REBELLION.



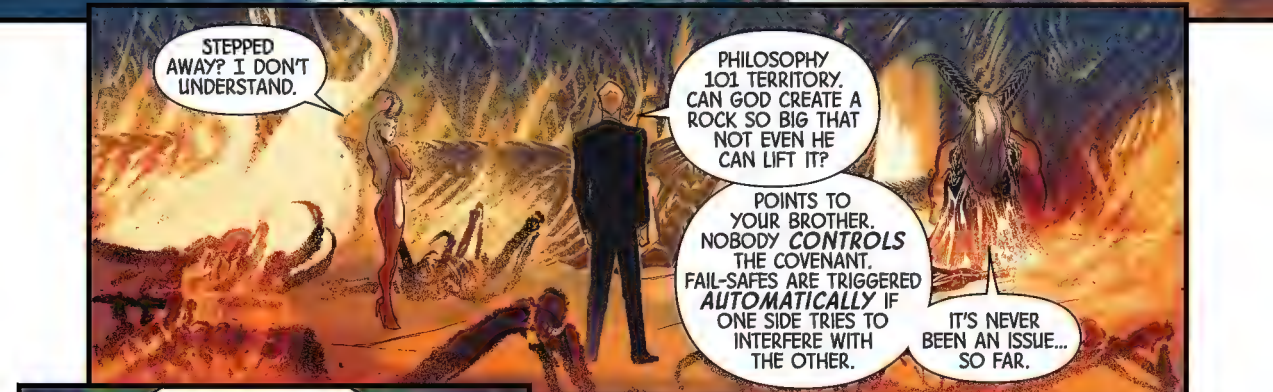


"WHEN *HE* PROPOSED THE COVENANT, I DEFIED HIM.



"I TOLD HIM THAT A **SUPREME BEING** COULD CHANGE THE RULES ANY TIME HE WANTED. HOW DID I KNOW HE'D PLAY FAIR?

"HE **ACCEPTED** MY CHALLENGE. HE CREATED THE COVENANT... AND THEN STEPPED AWAY!"



STEPPED AWAY? I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

PHILOSOPHY 101 TERRITORY. CAN GOD CREATE A ROCK SO BIG THAT NOT EVEN HE CAN LIFT IT?

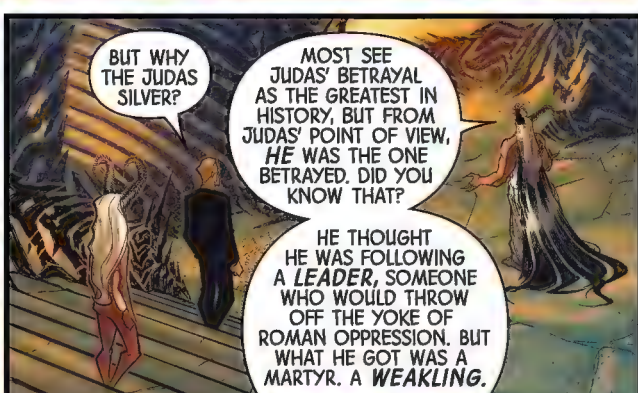
POINTS TO YOUR BROTHER. NOBODY **CONTROLS** THE COVENANT. FAIL-SAFES ARE TRIGGERED **AUTOMATICALLY** IF ONE SIDE TRIES TO INTERFERE WITH THE OTHER.

IT'S NEVER BEEN AN ISSUE... SO FAR.



BUT NECRODAMUS HAS AN ANGLE. HE FOUND A **LOOPHOLE**, DIDN'T HE?

MORE OF A **DESIGN FLAW** THAN A LOOPHOLE. THE WARDS AROUND THE COVENANT KEEP THE AGENTS OF HEAVEN AND OF HELL FROM INTERFERING WITH ONE ANOTHER. HOWEVER, THERE IS NOTHING TO KEEP **MORTALS** FROM INTERFERING.



BUT WHY THE JUDAS SILVER?

MOST SEE JUDAS' BETRAYAL AS THE GREATEST IN HISTORY, BUT FROM JUDAS' POINT OF VIEW, **HE** WAS THE ONE BETRAYED. DID YOU KNOW THAT?


HE THOUGHT HE WAS FOLLOWING A **LEADER**, SOMEONE WHO WOULD THROW OFF THE YOKE OF ROMAN OPPRESSION. BUT WHAT HE GOT WAS A MARTYR. A **WEAKLING**.



**BETRAYAL AND VENGEANCE** ARE OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE **SAME COIN**.

ONLY THE THINNEST OF LINES SEPARATE THEM.

I SEE.



JUDAS' SPIRIT FESTERS WITHIN THE SILVER, EAGER FOR REVENGE. AND WHEN NECRODAMUS ASSASSINATES THE HEAVENLY EMISSARY, JUDAS' VENGEANCE WILL BE COMPLETE.

THE RESULT IS THAT THE PORTAL FROM HEAVEN WILL SLAM CLOSED FOREVER.

**FAIL-SAFES**, REMEMBER? BASICALLY HEAVEN CUTS ITS LOSSES, AND THEN... WELL...



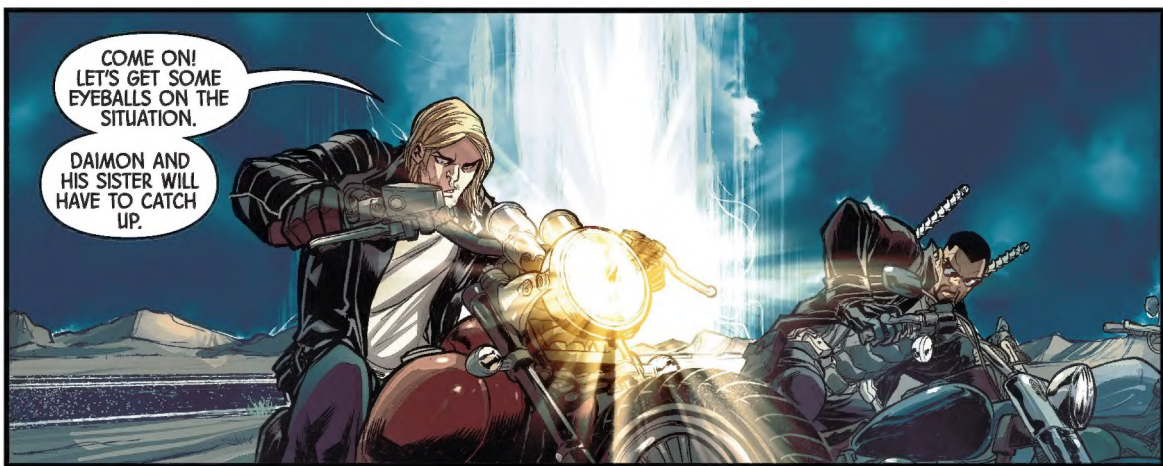


...THEN THERE  
WILL BE NOTHING  
TO STOP *MY* ARMIES  
FROM SWEEPING  
ACROSS THE  
EARTH.

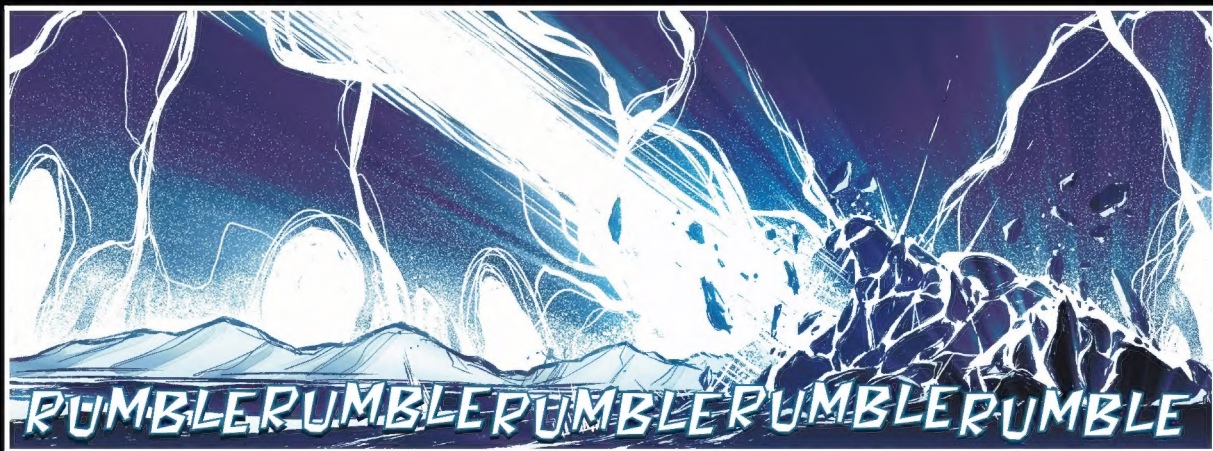
I HOPE  
YOU'RE A LITTLE  
MORE IMPRESSED  
WITH YOUR OLD  
MAN NOW.













**KRAK-SHOOM**



BELETH.  
ALWAYS A  
PLEASURE.

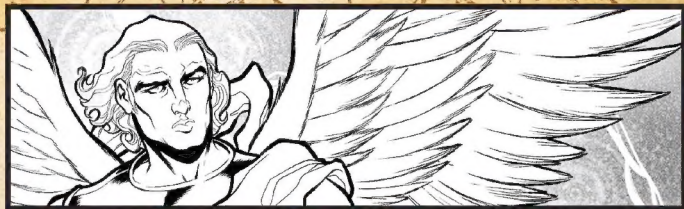
NICE  
TO SEE YOU  
AGAIN, MICHAEL.  
A THOUSAND YEARS  
JUST FLIES BY,  
DOESN'T IT?

**TO BE CONCLUDED...**





# NEXT ISSUE



**WAR AT THE GATES OF HELL CONCLUDES...**